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TABLE I

162 **Comparison of age-group distribution of Silwa Bahari and Egypt as a whole.**[1]

Age group	*Percentage of Total Population*	
	Silwa	*Egypt*
under 5	15·0	13·3
5–9	11·9	13·9
10–14	11·2	12·0
15–19	11·1	8·5
20–29	14·5	15·2
30–39	13·9	14·6
40–49	10·5	10·1
50–59	6·1	5·9
60 and over	5·7	6·3
unidentified ages	0·2	0·2

361 Like many other villages in Upper Egypt, Silwa lies at the foot of the Eastern Plateau. This physical setting divides the villagers' world in Silwa into three distinct parts: the 'hills', the villages, and the fields. The barren [823] 'hills', with their rugged dark rocks, though a source of fear and apprehen- [241] sion to the children, are not so inhospitable for the adults who rely on the [134] salty clay (nitrous soil) found in these hills for use as land fertilizer. The [345] village itself is composed of compact houses built of sandstone, which is available in the environment. There is hardly any planning in the village scheme, except for three main streets cutting across the village from east 363 to west and another main street leading from north to south; the first three forming the main routes from the village to the fields. The rest of the by-ways between the houses are narrow and twisted and are occasionally interrupted by heaps of stones and rubble. After 1936, owing to the increase 362 of village population, a new space between the old village and the railway line was allotted free by the government for building purposes. Most of this space has been built upon and inhabited mainly by those married sons whose parental homes have not sufficient room for their accommodation. 361 However, the finest buildings in the village are the two mosques. With [346] whitewashed walls, elegant and dignified minarets, and a floor covered with mats, these mosques represent one of the most cohesive forces in the [182] life of the villagers — religion.

[1] Here the percentages in Silwa are worked out from the figures given for 1947, but those of Egypt from the figures of 1937. Thus one could assume that the percentages of age groups have not radically changed. On the other hand, there are no details about age groups in Silwa in the 1937 Census.

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life of the villagers—religion. Next to the mosques in appearance and cleanliness are some of the shops and stores. These must have a minimum standard of building requirements, according to official regulations. On the north side of the village stand the police station, the post office and the elementary school. As to the fields, they extend to the west of the railway road up to the Nile bank, where the water-pumping works, established in 1932, stands with its modern buildings and garden and electric light.

It is worth mentioning here that each of the ten villages constituting the administrative unit of Silwa has its own name and is separated from its neighbours, however close these may be, by a recognized boundary, e.g. a high mound, a valley, or a stretch of gravel or sand. Each of these villages (or two villages combined, as in the case of four of the villages) has its mosque and village saint tomb with a cemetery attached to it. In spite of the fact that all the villages attached to Silwa trace their origin to one ancestor, as will be discussed later, their spatial separation is associated with sub-divisions in their kinship relations.

The physical characteristics of the inhabitants of these villages show a considerable degree of homogeneity. With their dark skins and long heads, they seem to conform to the ancient Southern Egyptian type.[1] All the inhabitants of Silwa, however, take great pride in describing themselves as descendants of Arab stock related to the Prophet. They refer to their traditions and customs and even their dress as 'Arabian'. Whether their claim is true or not, the belief is of central importance as one of the cohesive forces in the village community, and it is the means by which the villagers, especially the older generation, distinguish their way of life from that of others.[2]

The rhythm of daily life in Silwa hardly varies. The crack of dawn witnesses the muazzin calling for morning prayers; youths and men, mounted on their donkeys or camels, call on each other to climb the hills to fetch the fertilizer. By sunrise, most men and boys are heading towards the fields with their cattle and tools; and by broad daylight the village seems

[1] A. Batrawi, who has studied the physical anthropology of Egyptians, maintains that there is some justification for the usual division of Egypt into Upper and Lower Regions as far as the cephalic index is concerned. The people of Upper Egypt have longer but narrower heads, and longer fingers, feet and forearms than those of Lower Egypt. His study of the living samples of modern Egyptian population from all over Egypt suggests that they conform more closely to the Ancient Southern type. Moreover, the distribution of blood groups in present-day Egypt shows that the mass of the population is very homogeneous and there are no significant differences in this respect between the Moslems and the Copts. 'The Racial History of Egypt, Part II—Relationships of the Ancient and Modern Population of Egypt and Nubia', in *Journal of Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXVI, 1946, pp. 131–55.

[2] Arab genealogies must be accepted with great caution. The notion of the Arabs as a conquering race, known for their gallantry, honour and power, played effectively on the minds of the indigenous stock of the fellaheen, who showed an earnest desire to be considered members of that race. Many fellaheen have succeeded in linking themselves to an Arab tribe. A. Ammar, *The People of Sharyya* (Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University), pp. 13–21.

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neighbours in the field, where a small lamb or goat is killed in the field and cooked, on this occasion, by the men, while the women send the children with bread to the farm for the meal. It must be noticed that on this occasion, as well as at most communal meals, meat is served in one dish and is divided by one member or two amongst the participants. Such a meal will be followed by somebody standing up to invoke God's blessing —'baraka'—in the new harvest, as well as mercy on the deceased ancestors. Indeed Robertson Smith's remark is applicable to this community. 'The act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all who share the meal are brethren and that the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in their common act.'[1]

To sum up, the village is a community of small landowners, who, irrespective of the size of their holdings, consider their land to be the basis of their livelihood and security and to be a possession for which they have great emotional attachment. There is no appreciable functional differentiation in occupations; hence, the amount of skill and knowledge required for livelihood is almost identical. In spite of a great deal of economic self-sufficiency in the peasant or rural community, and of reliance on subsistence crops, the inhabitants are still dependent on outside forces for the price of their crops and for the sale of manufactured goods and textiles. Moreover, with a population pressure, more and more of the village members have reluctantly left to seek livelihood in towns and cities and to take up work as caretakers and domestic servants. On their return to the village, such groups of people bring with them some of the town atmosphere, considering themselves 'masrawia' (been to the city). They sometimes consider themselves more refined, and are usually elegantly dressed, even adopting a different accent. Such mobility is definitely beginning to challenge in some measure the traditional stability and conventional behaviour.

In spite of the increasingly impinging forces of city life and the admiration of the villagers for city ways, the small landowners still uphold and maintain the vested common interest in favour of the traditional ways of life, symbolized in the dignity of farm-work compared to other occupations, in the importance of family unity and honour of ancestry, in the religious ethic based on contentment and abhorrence of pleasure-seeking, and in social sensitivity to shame-provoking situations.

Furthermore, the feeling of equalitarianism is so striking in this community that any schematic class-division is very difficult to apply to its social structure. Here again, irrespective of their landholdings, they all eat from their hand produce consisting mainly of bread and the same varieties of home-grown vegetables; they live in similar dwellings, built of stone, dried mud and palm trunks, constructed by the village masons

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, London, 1894, p. 265.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is 'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthening this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure. With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contributions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the 'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of 5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to 2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1·5 per cent of the total number of landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.[1]

This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such maldistribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

[1] See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, 1939.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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during the month of Ramadan, when families co-operate in providing the 'Koran reciter' as well as other guests with tea and food.

Identification with the clan sentiment shows itself in cases of murder, where the clans of both the murderer and the murdered are involved. It is the obligation of the father, son, brother, uncle or paternal cousin to call for vengeance and for the clan to support him, either by claiming compensation (which, however, is seldom accepted if the claim is acknowledged) or by counter-murder, as the Koran ordains that murder should be punished with murder. The two clans through the mediation of another clan have to settle the dispute by deciding the compensation, called 'dia'.

This is no Durkheimian merging of the individual into the group. It is simply a statement of the compelling moral law that the individual, to be in line with the group, should express group-sympathy; if the group is angry, he should be angry, if it is insulted, he must feel that he is insulted.

This pattern of social structure does not apply merely to the Silwa community and the G'afra, but applies in varying degrees to the whole province of Aswan, and many other provinces that are known to the writer in Upper Egypt. In all this, the bond of common descent and family connections is one of the strongest factors as well as the most socially effective force in the social structure.

The village could also be classified into social groups on the basis of age. From the standpoint of age there are three broad social groupings. The first is referred to as 'youngsters' (jahhal), including all boys and girls up to the age of twelve or thirteen years. The second is the unmarried group (fityan), and the third is represented by the married adults, referred to as 'men or women'.

In public there is no free mixing between these three categories as it is considered 'impolite' for a youngster to sit with men, for example, and the converse would be shameful. Youngsters can only be seen in an adult gathering serving tea, or holding the ablution laver and ewer, or as messengers. In the case of young boys, they are marked by their head cap, while unmarried boys wear a turban, and the men besides a turban wear a 'tob' which is a black outer garment, and usually carry a stick or a stave.

Apart from segregation and dress, the age criterion shows itself in outward behaviour, by considering the older people as equivalent to the paternal uncle, or as fathers, or grandfathers if they are very old. Often older people are addressed by the kinship term 'Ammy' (O my paternal uncle), especially if one wants to be 'polite'. If one does not use the kinship term one has to address the older person by the title 'Sheikh' preceding his first name.

Sex is another criterion for two definite social groups: the world of men, and the world of women. In this community it is unthinkable to have free mixing between the two worlds, or that a thing done by one sex can also be done by a member of the other sex. Men have their scope of activities either in the fields or outside the compound, the women are mainly con-

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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her whereupon her hostess usually wraps some dry tea to take with her, and the same might happen in the case of a pot or a jar which could be spared, being given to the admirer. The spirit of giving away is also reflected in the often-heard word 'itfaddal' (you may have it), which Egyptians in general say when a person admires any of the articles of clothes, food, or any possessions.

The loosening of respect relationships is reflected in the attitude of some people with regard to the learned men and the so-called 'Koran-carriers'. Their absolute authority is dwindling, and one occasionally hears criticism of their knowledge compared to the 'ulema of the town. One villager once dubbed them as good for nothing except for eating during the ceremonies.

On the whole, people who have stayed for a long time working in town show a great deal of dissatisfaction with the village way of life. Although the majority of them feel obliged to send money to their parents, relatives, families and children, they resent the excessive demands of their relatives, and claim that towns people are free from such demands. One of the people who was working in Cairo complained to the writer that his relatives, who were supposed to be responsible for his land and sheep, did not attend to them properly while he was away. He continued, 'They only want you to give them tea and gifts on your return, and turn their backs on finding that you have not brought what they expect from you'.

The impact of urban life with its increasing pressures on the village has resulted in more and more strains in social living. The traditional social structure based on the solidarity of family and clan is losing some of its cohesive forces. The absolute authority of the old folks had been supreme, and no competition between old and young could ever be entertained. Now, the exception is not rare. The prestige and authority based on land property have also been questioned and is expressed in the common saying 'The beans are given to those who have no teeth'. With the social controls based on authority of age, power vested in the Arab councils, prestige of learned men in the village, go the clash between the ideal of hospitality and economic acquisitiveness, the emphasis on family rather than the clan, and a vague search for minding one's own business.

One meets, however, those few individuals who have spent part of their life in the city, criticizing some of the village ways of life such as pride in the clan or the extended family; they praise wealth rather than generosity, and individualism than family ties. Such persons are pitied by their relatives as 'being influenced by the life of "being away" ghurba' or as having 'an eye on Paradise and another on Hell'. In other words, such expressions are the villagers' way of describing 'the marginal man'.[1]

Such changes of social attitudes, together with the increasing pressures of economic conditions, have created an atmosphere of insecurity and

[1] See Everett Stonequist, *The Marginal Man, A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, New York, 1937.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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182 anxiety, weakening the stability that obtained in the traditional social
178 structure. My informant, Mahmoud, told me once, 'If the present people of Silwa find you writing a complaint to the Government against somebody, they will spontaneously offer their signature or their stamp without asking you about the nature of the complaint, or even against whom'. He went on to say, 'These people never learn a lesson. God sent them the malaria epidemic followed by the torrent that swept their harvest, but they never guard against God's anger, and they will go on eating each other's flesh.'

155 Such insecurity and anxiety is bound to have its repercussions upon the children as they grow up. Hearing remarks of dissatisfaction about the environment and the people in general from their elders, the children themselves feel insecure and become more suspicious.

178 To sum up, the folk life of the village has certainly undergone a certain amount of change from the point of view of what some anthropologists call the material culture, and the instruments of living. The villagers, for instance, are more familiar with pecuniary values and commercial transactions. More often than not, borrowing money at present is accompanied [926] by writing a receipt, while hitherto this was considered to be a social disgrace. Even at present, some creditors hand over the receipt to a third person to keep it as a sign of his reluctance to accept a written bond. Like Chan Kom, however, commercialism has not entered the primary family. The writer has not heard of sisters or brothers living together doing business with each other on a commercial basis, and it is almost inconceivable of a father hiring his son, or a son his father.[1]

It is obvious that the villagers are keen to accept and imitate the [369] material symbols of city life, and it is on the material level that the folk culture of the village has been relatively more exposed to the processes of social change. On the other hand, social structure and organization and values have not changed very much. Apart from the few unsatisfied deviants, the conceptual and social orientation of the village folk life still holds valid as the same principles that have guided conduct, behaviour, and relationships are still maintained. In this pattern of folk living, the focal point is undoubtedly religion, as it continues to be the validating force [182] of life, explaining it, and providing people with their major intellectual and emotional satisfactions and dissatisfactions in coping with the problems of life.

[1] Robert Redfield, *A Village that Chose Progress (Chan Kom Revisited)*, p. 66.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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guilt, especially with regard to sex, produce the psychological disposition to sexual jealousy institutionalized in this community as well as in many other communities in rural Egypt? It is well known that in Egypt disputes over land, water and women rank as three of the most common causes of crime.[1] This does not mean that sibling rivalry and sex prohibitions are the only causes, but seem to provide the psychological field for the moral and religious values connected with fidelity and the propriety of sexual jealousy. A woman is identified not only with 'shame' but also with 'honour' and to preserve one's honour is tantamount to avoid exposure to shame.[2]

These attitudes, according to Kardiner, would also help to understand the dichotomy of sexes and to prevent sexual jealousies from coming out to open hostilities. They also appear to be one of the weapons of social equilibrium and of preserving in-male and in-female solidarity.[3]

Here it is also possible to give some satisfactory answer to the connection between the nature of the community and its demands on individuals as represented by sexual regulations. The central and principal quality in a polite (muaddab) or virtuous person is his conformity to the norms governing sexual behaviour; the flouting of which in any manner would condemn him as impolite and vicious irrespective of his other qualities. Morality and virtue are primarily connected with stringent sexual controls. The villagers, although envying the city dwellers their material comfort, deplore their moral laxity, e.g. women's emancipation in dress, love affairs, use of cosmetics, women's participation in men's work. In this community I heard of no cases of adultery or illegitimate children for the last thirty years, though cases of homosexuality and jokes about sexual pleasure from animals are not uncommon amongst the adolescents and young men. Stringent sexual controls are an essential agent for the maintenance of solidarity, the cohesion and the orderly living of a group with its puritanic religious code and its social organization based, among other things, on a clear-cut sex dichotomy.[4]

Whatever views may be held about the psychological problems connected with adolescence in Silwa, this stage is certainly the prologue to the full status of adulthood which is eventually attained by marriage. Marriage, after circumcision, marks the greatest ceremonial occasion in the individual's life. The best way of describing marriage conditions in Silwa is to give an account of a marriage ceremony which the writer

[1] Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East*, London, 1948.

[2] Cf. J. C. Flugel, *Man and his Motives*, London, 1943, and Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-analysis*, where he writes: 'The ultimate source of the fear and guilt that lie behind all these reactions (of sexual jealousy) is the relationship to another potential man and it is derived from the boy's unconscious fixation on childish attitudes; it is hard for him to "picture" a woman quite apart from another man to whom she secretly belongs.' p. 483.

[3] A. Kardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 476–7.

[4] See Margaret Read, 'The Moral Code of the Ngoni and their former Military State', in *Africa*, Vol. XI, 1938.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Chapter Twelve

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

THE preceding chapters represent a study of indigenous education in the village community of Silwa against a full portrait of the community life and organization. While it would be impossible here to gather up all the threads from which the whole survey has been woven, some general observations and conclusions can be made as an expansion of some of the issues already raised.

It must be emphasized here again that the education procedures, content and methods discussed in this work obtain in a relatively homogeneous, isolated community of small landholders. The characteristics and the end-product of these educative measures and child-training practices cannot be generalized without wider research in other areas and provinces having different cultural and economic backgrounds. A particularly relevant type of research would be, for example, in peasant communities of large farms, or in villages where there exists a number of families descended from old aristocratic families. Since large and small farmers may differ in a number of ways that are causally interrelated and self-consistent, one would expect that such differences would have their reflections in some aspects of children's education.[1]

Another general observation emerging from our functional approach is connected with the oft-heard criticisms of the irrationality of certain social institutions and customs in rural Egypt. Many social thinkers and reformers in Egypt have condemned the elaborate and expensive celebrations of circumcision, weddings, and funerals as pitfalls through which the conservative peasant falls into debt. The extended family has also been described as an institution that causes some of its members to shirk responsibility and become indolent.[2] It is apparent that these critics

[1] For sociological formulations concerning the interrelationships of the family, farm economics and kinship amongst a small farm population, see Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, 1940. See also Julian H. Steward, *Area Research*, pp. 123–4.

[2] A. Ammar, *The People of Sharqiya*. Also L. K. Tao, 'Some Chinese Characteristics in the Light of Chinese Family', in *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, ed. by E. E. Evans-Pritchard *et al.*, London, 1934.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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evaluate such institutions purely from the point of view of their immediate economic rationality and not as means of 'mutual adjustment of purposes in a total situation'. In such above-mentioned occasions, one can hardly fail to note the social values connected with prestige and the elements of reciprocity embodied in these forms of celebrations. Moreover, one cannot ignore the validity of their educative and cohesive functions. Since reciprocity is one of the major stabilizing forces in this community, its importance requires 'spinning out', since 'a solitary presentation of the principle would be ineffective'.[1] The economic method of interpreting social phenomena is one devised by particular workers as a means of considering such phenomena in the light of their particular field, and cannot be accepted as the whole or the sole explanation. The rationality of ceremonies and the functionalism of the extended family must be interpreted in the light of the community's social ends. In this connection, Firth remarks that '. . . economic activity is subordinate to social ends. It is only by studying those ends that one can see how particular economic systems work'.[2] It was pointed out how social and religious values render dealing in usury, or acceptance of compensation, repulsive to the moral code of this community. On the other hand, social prestige and rivalry combined with a weak ego-structure would explain why law-suits about land or other quarrels can be pursued with seemingly endless effort and expense, to the extent that such procedures might cost both sides more than the market value of the object under dispute.

Failure to assess social facts in their total cultural perspective has often militated against the best intentions of reformers. Compulsory education in terms of abolishing illiteracy has yielded negligible results, as shown earlier, even compared with the expenditure allocated to it. It has been related to neither the cultural needs nor the technical skills required in rural communities. Campaigns against infectious diseases must take into account the fact that, to the villagers, fear of contagion is subordinate to the rendering of reciprocal social obligation connected with sickness. The preference for reserving and offering the 'best food' to guests or strangers rather than be eaten by the members of the family for its 'nutritional value' must be viewed and understood first in terms of 'the people's values' concerning hospitality and generosity.

The adherence to traditional customs, beliefs, ways of thinking and living is the basis of the peasants' psychological security. That peasants rigidly adhere to their traditions and do not listen to 'reason' as explained to them by scientists or government officials has its root cause in this

[1] S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, p. 400. It is worth noting that in this community, as well as in many other parts of Egypt, the standardized social comments are legion as are also the respective responses in occasions of work, eating, drinking, building a house, after having a haircut, after toilet, on wearing new clothes, after having a bath, and on many other occasions for which good manners necessitate a particular expression or ejaculation and responding to it in a particular way.

[2] R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, p. 133.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

PREFACE

peasants have welcomed me into their lives has enabled me to get into much closer touch with them than is possible for the ordinary foreigner. I can truly say that the kindness generally that I have received has made the years which I have spent in Egypt the happiest in my life. My desire is that I may be able to continue my work and leave behind me a true record of the many interesting and ancient customs of that most attractive country.

To my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, I am indebted for all the ancient analogies. Not only so, but he has devoted hours to the careful perusal of my manuscript, and moreover has seen this book through the press and made all the indexes, thus enabling me to carry on uninterruptedly my researches in Egypt. If, therefore, the book achieves any success I feel that much of that success will be due to him.

To the Councils of the Royal Anthropological Institute and of the Folklore Society, to the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Society, to the publishers of *Discovery* (Messrs Benn), and to the editors of *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Evening News* I am indebted for permission to include in this book articles of mine that have already appeared in their various journals and papers.

To Professor J. L. Myres I must here express my sincere thanks for reading through all the proofs in collaboration with my brother; and to Mr E. S. Thomas, late of the Egyptian Ministry of Finance, and now Assistant in the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, thanks are due for supplying me with better translations of the Arabic charms, etc., than I had before.

All the photographs, I should state, have been taken by myself, with the exception of a few which were taken in 1920 by my friend Mr D. J. V. Forster, of Pembroke College, Oxford, at my request, on the occasions when he was present with me at the ceremonies which they illustrate.

I have purposely suppressed the names of people and villages in nearly every instance as I do not think it would be either desirable or fair (see p. 231) to publish them in a semi-popular book of this kind.

Finally, I should like to point out that with the spread of education the old customs and beliefs are already beginning to die out. It is thus most important that they should be recorded at once, before they suffer complete extinction. I hope, therefore, that my work

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

INTRODUCTION

ON UNDERSTANDING THE FELLAH

A country's peasantry is like the small particles in a sentence, or the strips of leading in a stained-glass window. It binds the nation together, gives it stability and character. It provides that humble but indispensable support on which both economic and social systems rely. By producing more than it consumes, the peasantry maintains society in health, and ensures a sound regularity to the state finances. 182 ●

But the peasantry as a class is composed of separate individuals, of men. Enslaved as they may be to soil and seasons, long-suffering and slow, hide-bound and unprogressive as they appear to us, it is these people above all others who deserve the name of men. 565 182

Too long have we confused the producer with his product and the worker with the fruits of his labour. We have taken our fill of the harvest without a thought for the man who made it grow. We have failed to notice the distress which he himself could not put into words, and perhaps only half felt. And so today we are astonished at the reawakening of the peasantry, and realise with a shock of surprise what a dead weight of ignorance has been allowed to accumulate, both in official circles and in society at large, about the man of the soil. 114

By developing the themes of pastoralism and of natural beauty, and so confounding the peasant with his background, poets and artists of all ages, from Virgil to the present day, have conspired to draw a veil of illusion over the realities of country life. They have given us wonderful pictures, to be sure, but in so doing they have accustomed us to see in country life nothing but its picturesque and sentimental side, to find in an image the whole reality. The "sower's

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771 Out of reverence for the past, which for the ignorant
182 fellah is shrouded in mystery, a system of rites has been
183 evolved, which he considers inviolable. This, while maintaining and comforting the individual, at the same time stifles his liberty and initiative and dulls his spirit until he is no longer able to distinguish between the essential and the superfluous.

But this structure, however vast it may be, does not constitute the whole of the fellah's psychology. It is one of the pressures he has to bear. Like the pressure of the soil and of living men, it warps him considerably, but it is no more able than they are to destroy his soul.

their villages and in their fields they provide subjects for the art of others, but remain unconscious of their own beauty. Yet their love of the soil, their sense of rhythm, and their taste for songs, stories and colours should make their artistic education easy. /81 /83

They are more apt at figures, at repetition and at copying. The author has met fellaheen who can do very complicated arithmetical problems in their heads, and can put an accountant right where he has made a mistake, whether by accident or design. Others reproduce models they are given with the utmost faithfulness, and retain for a very long time the memory of a remark or a visit, or of an object they have been shown. But although their memory is excellent their understanding is slow. [803]

Yet in childhood they are quick to understand, as may be seen when they are in school or at play; but at about fifteen they begin to get dull. Up to this age the fellaheen are lively, and seem quicker than the people of the West.

Their early physical development and the effect of the climate might explain this. But what can explain the apathy that overcomes them afterwards, and keeps them, in spite of everything, a backward race? /81 /82

Undernourishment has been suggested as a cause. But if this were responsible their physical development would also suffer. The adult fellah has a strong constitution. Some sociologists put it down to masturbation, which is fairly common in the Islamic East; but this vice seems limited to the cities, for country people are much less morbid. It has also been attributed to the unavoidable effect of climate, as a plant which grows too quickly stops growing at a certain point, and withers. But there are fellaheen who have left their villages and produced in the second generation good doctors, capable engineers, or at least officials and businessmen equal to those of other countries. [142 839]

It can only be his social environment which limits the intelligence of the young fellah, that is to say the crass ignorance which surrounds him from his first entry into the community, and the routine of a life which bows him down to the soil and condemns him to everlasting repetition. This is what arrests the development of his mind. Intelligence is developed by new gain and achievements, which are unknown in this too stable world of the Egyptian peasantry.

/89 cont'd/ 755
drums and the cries uttered can be applied also in describing a war, 781
or another Central-African dance. 177

The Kūdiya is a real medicine man who is an incarnation 756
of the spirits. The sacrifices, the smearing of the body with blood, 782
the collecting of the bones of the sacrificed animal, the burying it in 791
the soil or throwing it in the river etc... are all elements of the art 187
practiced by any African tribe. In other words, this article could
have been called: "An African Element in Egypt."

The twofold and complicated Zar-conception of Egypt is 755
due to the Egyptian cultural type. Every belief of supernatural nature 177
was combined in the Zar, even Islamic saints were added to the list
of spirits and some Quoranic words are recited.

An important factor which is responsible for the survival of 755
such an interesting practice is that it offers an opportunity for women 182
gathering and dancing, for buying clothes and jewelry, and satisfying 562
some sexual urge.

Zusammenfassung.

Im heutigen Aegypten sowie in Abessinien und im Sudan spielt der Glaube an böse Geister eine bedeutende Rolle, namentlich unter den Frauen niedereren Standes. Die Geister gehen in die Körper ihrer Opfer ein und nehmen sie in Besitz. Nur durch die komplizierte Zar-Zeremonie können sie besänftigt werden. Die im Zar mitwirkenden Personen und ihre Funktionen werden eingehend geschildert: die Zentralgestalt Kudiya (meist eine Frau, nur selten ein Mann), einige Assistenten und Musiker und schliesslich die Geister selbst. Die Untersuchung enthält auch eine Reihe von Hinweisen auf Altägypten.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

tion, from which even the displaced functionary and his abettors do not escape. The hangman's assistant of yesterday is sentenced to be hanged, the bastinadoer to be beaten, the *kashkatib* or chief secretary to imprisonment, immense taxes are imposed, and all decisions are set down on a sheet of paper. There is no pardon for the condemned unless on the payment of a few piasters as backshish. Thus they move from house to house, the taxes being levied in the form of backshish. Three days does the capricious rule of the ephemeral tyrant last; at length he, that is his dress, is condemned to death by burning, and from the ashes creeps out the slavish Fellah. In the times of good-natured Mohammed Ali the abu nerus is said to have ventured even to approach his throne, but the harmless jest has now fallen a good deal out of practice. The ancients also celebrated feasts when the Nile was at its height, in the month of Tût, as, for instance, that of Hermes on the 19th of this month. The anniversary of the opening of the canal is kept only at Cairo.

BIRTH-DAY CEREMONIES.

The monotony of the work-day life of the Mohammedan, interrupted by no Sunday, is richly and agreeably varied by domestic ceremonies and observances. However thrifty or niggardly he usually is, on such occasions he spares no expense.

When the time comes that a child is to see the light the midwife makes her appearance with her seat, and displays the greatest activity on behalf of her suffering charge; female relatives and neighbours also come in crowds to encourage and advise. It is often sought to lighten the difficult task by hanging opium about the mother, or making her eat the drug. The newly-born child is merely dried, not washed, and immediately laid upon a corn sieve; beside its head lies the knife with which the umbilical cord has been cut, and corn is scattered round about. This procedure is intended to drive away the *karjne*, that is, the child's evil brother or sister from the spirit realm that always makes its appearance and tor-